



Community Health Improvement Process

**2014-2015 Community Health Needs Assessment
Community Conversation with the Latino Community
Mid County Regional Service Center, Wheaton, MD
June 17, 2015**

Introduction

Healthy Montgomery hosted a community conversation on health and well-being in partnership with the Montgomery County Latino Health Initiative on Wednesday, June 17, 2015. The conversation took place from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Mid County Regional Service Center in Wheaton, MD. There were 44 participants representing members of the general public. The conversation was held in Spanish and facilitated by Carlos Ugarte.

The Community Conversation included a discussion of what is meant by health and well-being at the individual and community levels, elements of a healthy community, community assets and challenges in Montgomery County, and practical steps to improve the health and well-being of the community. One large group discussion was held and participants were offered the opportunity to contribute comments and feedback regarding the meeting in writing.

Defining Health and Well-Being

The facilitator began the process by asking the participants to define quality of life in the context of the individual and the community.

At the individual level, the following were identified that define and/or contribute to a good or positive quality of life:

- A positive psychosocial state of each person
- Good physical, emotional and mental health; and not only the absence of diseases (the participant made reference to the World Health Organization's definition of health¹)
- A stable economic situation
- The availability of "good quality" information on the issues (health and other issues like immigration, jobs, community resources) that are of priority for the community

1 WHO Definition of Health - Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (Citation?)

When the group was asked "How do you imagine a healthy community?", the following responses were given:

- People are physically active and eat healthy.
- Community members are taking steps to prevent health problems.



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- A healthy community is when you have more time to spend with your children, time to do fun things and have enough income to live well.
- When you are able to obtain health coverage (insurance and/or other ways to get health care).
- A healthy community has employment.

At the community level, a healthy community was described as follows:

- Is well educated.
- Has security (physical, economic, immigration status, no violence).
- Has access to good, clean and safe schools.
- A place where kids can breathe clean air and have safe places to run and play like big parks.
- A place that is free from drugs.
- A place where there is no violence (in the home, schools, streets).
- Is where the government listens and cares about what the people need and want and makes laws that protect the citizens and promotes healthy communities.
- There is easy and free access to community centers and information at low cost and that are nearby.
- Is a community where there are good friends, neighbors and where good interpersonal relations are promoted; and there is a solid network of support among its members.
- Where the family is recognized, respected and supported as the center of everything that happens in the community.
- Where basic needs are met including food, shelter, health and employment

Assets that Support Health and Well-Being

The discussion regarding assets began with an open conversation regarding the positive factors that the Latino community contributes, as individuals and community-wide, to Montgomery County in the context of health and well-being. These positive factors are:

- Latinos are sociable and put a lot of emphasis on supporting and helping each other in times of need.
- “We like to talk a lot and that helps share good information and helps people avoid complications or problems in their lives”.
- Hardworking with a strong desire and commitment to “getting ahead”.
- Generous with time and resources (even though they may be limited)
- Perseverant
- Faith in God (Goes to church)
- Family and community oriented

With regards to assets in Montgomery County that support the Latino community’s health and well-being, the following was identified:

- The asthma and diabetes programs were started and provide good services.
- There are more places to go to for check-ups and services where Spanish is spoken and staff is sensitive to the needs and realities of the Latino community.
- There is more health information available via the Internet.



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- The 311 Bilingual line is an excellent resource to get all types of information regarding County programs.
- Increased access to care through Obama Care (Affordable Care Act)
- There seems to be more community-based clinics where Spanish is spoken.
- The schools and family services programs are important and have contributed to improvement in the quality of life; they also promote more communication at home between parents and kids.
- Better communication at schools with parents/students' guardians
- Immigration Status is not important and that creates more trust in the community.
- Waste removal is good and the cleaning campaigns have been effective.
- Montgomery County has a great park system that is accessible for all.

Barriers to Health and Well-Being

The conversation around barriers focused primarily on issues relating to County programs and services (or lack thereof), but it should be noted that there was a general consensus among the group that community members should also take responsibility for addressing the barriers (e.g. participating more in discussions at schools and with Montgomery County government representatives) and engaging more in their respective communities.

Provided, below, are the most salient points that were made regarding barriers. As will be noted, some are in direct contrast to what were listed as assets. This reflects the diversity of experiences and opinions among the participants as well as the probable differences in quantity and quality of services/programs across the County.

What are the challenges to health and well-being?

- More and better translations at the service points are needed.
- Better access and quality of housing. The costs of quality housing in the County is very high (e.g. areas with new and nice construction are only at the reach of those that have a lot of economic resources).
- Displacement of people to build or renovate moderate and low income housing is a problem.
- More and better parks are needed. The County promotes the importance of physical activity, but there are too few places to go to exercise.
- Health centers need to include more mental health services.
- Public transportation is sometimes an issue (long waits, unreliable, limited service areas).
- More holistic programs that take into account the mind, spirit and body are needed.
- There needs to be a way to increase the distribution and dissemination of information about services and programs.
- More employment opportunities (including professionals)

Some of the biggest challenges and obstacles include:

- Racism
- Isolation (especially for the elderly) and in the context of being in a different and new culture in the US.
- Lack of solidarity (among the community itself and between the community and County representatives)



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- Mental health issues
- Lack of cultural competence in the programs and people of the County.

Practical Steps to Improve Health and Well-Being

The following lists some of the ideas for improving health and well-being of the Latino community of Montgomery County:

- Each person should get involved in the community to improve the services and to make sure that the community's needs and wishes are represented.
- Construct more Health Centers.
- If there is more employment and better income many of the challenges and issues that the community faces would be addressed.
- Use mass media more to communicate health information in Spanish to the community.
- More social services including support groups, especially for people that just moved to Montgomery County.
- Create and promote community/neighborhood centers.
- Schools should promote more involvement of parents and children including having schools where the parents can be the teachers.
- Teaching people how to be better parents.
- Low cost summer camps.
- Invite other representatives from the County to these types of sessions so they can hear directly from the community.
- Develop community/neighborhood committees to discuss issues, propose solutions, and represent the community's interests, needs and realities to decision makes.
- Conduct community surveys (by trusted Individuals like community health workers) to learn the realities and challenges of the community and to propose new ideas for solutions.

Community Conversation Feedback

Participants were provided an opportunity to give written feedback about the meeting. In a short closeout survey, participants were asked, "Is there anything else that you want us to know, including what you like or did not like about this community conversation?"

No participant feedback was provided in written form.